

A
S E R M O N
PREACHED AT
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St Nicholas's Church in Newcastle,
BEFORE THE
G O V E R N O R S
OF THE
I N F I R M A R Y

FOR THE COUNTIES
O F

Durham, Newcastle, and Northumberland.

On WEDNESDAY, June 21, 1758.

BEING THEIR ANNIVERSARY MEETING.

By OLIVER NAYLOR, A.M.

Rector of Morpeth, and Chaplain to the Right Hon. the Earl of CARLISLE.

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S E R M O N.

MATTHEW xxv. 36.

I WAS SICK, AND YE VISITED ME.



WE have in This Chapter several Beautiful and Expressive Parables, in regard to the Method, by which the Proceedings of Our most Righteous Judge will be regulated at the General Day of Retribution. Our Blessed Lord, agreeably to his usual manner of Instruction, lets us into the Knowledge of That most Interesting Event, by Plain and Apposite Comparisons, all equally tending to Prove the necessity of Good Works, which will alone constitute That Distinction, which is to take Place Hereafter, when the several Talents, which have been committed to our Care, must be Respectively accounted for.

CHARITY and Benevolence to our Fellow-Creatures were the Practice, as well as Language of the Great Author of our Faith,
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whilst he continued upon Earth for our Instruction in Righteousness—His Human Nature upon all occasions most sensibly dictated their Relief—His Divine Nature most miraculously completed it. Whatever other engagements demanded his Attention, whatever Obligations he was under to the Performance of other Duties, all were suspended for a time—all were immediately given up, in order that the several Distresses, which solicited his Relief, might be Provided for; in order that “the Dumb might speak, the Maimed might be made whole, the Lame might walk, and the Blind might see.” How often did he incur the Censure of Those rigid Admirers of Legal Ordinances, by the Preference, which he gave upon all occasions, to Acts of Mercy and of Love, before Those, which They looked upon in a far more Obligatory Light? With what Strength of Reasoning does he Expose the Weakness of Their Arguments, by shewing the superior Excellency of His Proceedings to Theirs, who with a sort of Self-satisfaction employed the same care and earnestness in Preserving the Life of an Ass or an Ox, as he did in Restoring Health to the noblest Production of the All-mighty Power? For “which of you,” says he, “shall have an Ass or an Ox fallen into a Pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath Day?” *Luke xiv. 5.*

THE Miracles, which Our Blessed Saviour Performed, were generally of such a Nature, that at the same time they shewed the Power of his Divinity, they shewed likewise his Exuberant Love to Mankind. Health and Salvation were the constant operations of his Hands, so that, “when the Ear heard him,
“ it

“ it Blessed him, and when the Eye saw him, it gave witness to him.” *Job xxix. 11.* Thus it was, that “ the Sun of Righteousness arose with Healing in his Wings. If therefore God so loved us, we ought also to love one another,” by employing every opportunity, which Divine Providence has put into our Power, to the Comfort and consolation of our Fellow-Creatures; the Amiability of which Disposition it is my Province at this time to explain, tho’ Blessed be God, without any necessity of Exhorting you to the Practice of a Duty, which has already received such ample Testimonies of Your Approbation and Regard.

BEFORE I proceed any further in This Discourse, it will not, I think, be improper to take Notice of the several senses, in which The Word ἐπισκέψασθε, which Our English Translation renders in the text, “ Ye Visited,” is made use of in the Holy Scriptures. The Different Significations of This Word will let us into a clear and distinct Notion of That Charity, which, at the Final Account of All things, will be considered by Our Most Righteous Judge in the same Light, as if he himself had been Partaker of it. “ I was sick,” says Our Blessed Lord, “ and Ye Visited me;” so true is it in this, and no other sense, that Our Righteousness reacheth unto God.

First. Ἐπισκέπτεσθαι signifies to Provide whatever may be necessary for the Subsistence of Those, whom we intend to take care of. It is in this sense, that it is made use of in *Ruth i. 6.* where she declares, that she had heard, ὅτι ἐπισκεπται Κύριος τὸν λαὸν αὐτῆς τε δῶναι αὐτοῖς ἄρτον, “ that the LORD had visited his
“ People

“ People, in giving them Bread,” that is, in furnishing them with every thing that was necessary for their Support. “ Pure Religion and undefiled before God, and the Father,” says St. James i. 27, is this, Ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανούς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν, “ to Visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction,” that is, to exercise all the Benevolent Offices of Charity towards them, and to endeavour to lessen and alleviate the Present Weight of their Misfortunes, by the several Methods, which Those, who abound in the good things of this Life, are always furnished with for Promoting the Happiness of Themselves and others.

ANOTHER sense of the Word ἐπισκέπτεσθαι is, to Visit with an Intention of Restoring the Person to the several Advantages of his Former State, which he has been unhappily deprived of. It is thus that St. Luke uses it, i. 68. Ἐυλογητὸς Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς τῷ Ἰσραὴλ, ὅτι ἐπισκέψατο, καὶ ἐποίησε λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ. “ Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath Visited and Redeemed his People.” That is, he hath Visited them so, as to do them good, and to Restore them to the Health of their Salvation, which they had lost, and which they never could have recovered, but by This amazing Instance of the Divine Goodness.

AGAIN. Ἐπισκέπτεσθαι signifies to see, if Justice be done in every respect to the Party, in favour of whom we Interest ourselves. “ When Moses was full Forty Years old, it came into his heart,” as we find it in the Acts of the Apostles vii. 23. Ἐπισκέψασθαι τὰς ἀδελφεὰς αὐτῶν τὰς ἡδὲ Ἰσραὴλ, “ to Visit his Brethren the Children of Israel,” where it is plain from his Behaviour, that

that it is to be taken in this Sense, for the following Verse informs us, that “ seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed.”

Ἐπισκέπτεσθαι likewise signifies not only to go and see now and then, but frequently, to take an exact Account of every thing that can possibly come under our Observation at such times, and to attend to every minute Circumstance of Distress, in order that we may be able, if possible, to remove it. From These different Significations of the Word ἐπισκέψασθε, “ Ye Visited,” We are let in to the several Branches, as well as Management of This Charity.

THE Objects of This Charity are Plentifully supplied with every kind of Subsistence, that is necessary and Proper for their Present circumstances: Their Diet is adapted to the Nature of the several Distempers, which they labour under, in order that the Medicines applied upon these occasions may operate more successfully. Every Possible Method, which Knowledge and Experience can furnish, is made use of for Restoring them to their Former State of Health; and every Religious Motive, most forcibly Pressed upon them, for Patience and Resignation to the Divine Will, and for making their Peace with God, by a Sincere and Effectual Repentance. The constant Attendance of Those, who are Appointed to Inspect and overlook This Charity, most effectually secures it from every Abuse, by giving an Immediate Check and Redress to any Complaints, that may possibly arise. Such is the Nature of This most Excellent Charity, which is the occasion of Our Assembling together at this time, in order to Return our thanks to Almighty God, for the Great Success, with which it has been Attended.

I SHALL employ the remaining part of this Discourse in shewing——

First. THE Excellency of This Charity, in regard to the Community.

Secondly. THE Happy Consequences of it, in regard to Those, who are thus disposed in their Hearts, to provide for the Sick and Needy.

First. I AM to shew the Excellency of This Charity, in regard to the Community.

IN the Disposition of the several Members, which constitute both the Body Natural and the Body Politick, it has been so admirably contrived by Divine Wisdom, that each shall have a reference to the other, that each shall contribute to the Happiness and Well-being of the other; so that, “the Eye cannot say unto the Hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you.” 1 Cor. xii. 21. Each Member has its appointed uses, its Destined Sphere to act in, in order that by their several operations the whole Machine may be kept entire. And as this Regulation is necessary in regard to the Body Natural, so does it hold likewise equally so, in regard to the Body Politick. The Labour of the Lower Class of Mankind is as essential to the Happiness of the Rich and Opulent, as Their Affluence of Fortune is to the Maintenance and Support of Those, who by Divine Appointment are “to eat their Bread
“in

“in the Sweat of their Face.” Without the Mutual Assistance of each other, neither the one could “be clothed in Purple, and fine Linen, and fare sumptuously every Day, nor the other eat of his own Vine, and of his own Fig-tree, and drink the Waters of his own Cistern.” Since therefore the Laborious and Industrious are as necessary a Part of the Community, as even the Rich and the Opulent, what can be better calculated for the Preservation of the Whole, than the noble Provision, which is made by This Charity, for the several Diseases and Accidents which That Part of the Human Species is most Exposed to, which is least able of itself to Procure proper Assistance for? How many useful Members of Society are by this Means Restored to their former Strength and Vigour, and enabled to perform the several Functions of their Callings, in order that we may “eat the Labour of their Hands.” By this Means the Voice of Joy and Health is heard in the Dwellings of the Poor, instead of the Plaintive Moans of Pining Sickness and Distressful Care. But Great, as these Advantages are, they are not the only ones, that arise from such a Provision for the Sick and Needy. The Happy Effects of Temperance and Sobriety are here so sensibly felt, as that they cannot but operate in some degree upon Those, who are now under a necessity of attending to their Efficacy; and thus by acquiring a Temporary Habit of These Virtues, it is far from being Improbable, that many will have Resolution enough to conform, in the Future Part of their Life, to the Practice of what they cannot but be convinced is so essential to their Health, so absolutely necessary for enabling them to Provide for themselves and Families by Diligence and Industry in their Respective Callings. But there is another Blessing, which attends
This.

This Charitable Work of Ours, of the Greatest Consequence and Importance to Mankind, which were I not to take Notice of, I should not only be greatly deficient in the Part, which I have undertaken, but in That Regard and Esteem, which is due to Those, who labour more Abundantly, than us all, in This Great Work of Christian Love.

SINCE Nothing is more certain, than that Sickness and Affliction are the most persuasive Calls to Religion, and that Men under these Circumstances are most Powerfully disposed to turn their Eyes into themselves, to search, and examine their own consciences, and to trace their Present Misery to its true and Original Cause; I say, as this is the case, Every the least tendency to This Holy Work is most happily improved to their great and unspeakable Comfort by the Pious Care of the Clergy of This Place, who are unwearied in the conscientious discharge of This most important Part of the Ministerial Office. Whatever therefore be the Divine Determination, in regard to Those Objects, which are here taken care of, every possible Method is employed; either to restore them to Soundness both of Body and Mind, or to fit and prepare them for that Great Change, they must undergo, when they “put off their Earthly tabernacle of the Flesh.”

I AM now to consider the Happy Consequences to Those, who are thus disposed in their Hearts to Provide for the Sick and Needy.

WERE I to address you upon a Plan of Moral Principles, I need only observe, that to relieve Distress in any Shape is one
of

of the most Pleasing Sensations of Humanity, and that to extend our Care and Concern to the Preservation of the Human Species, passes amongst Mankind, for the Highest Instance of a noble and generous Soul. But as Christianity is built upon a far more glorious and extensive Plan, let us not lose sight of That, in order to pay a Compliment to our Moral Excellencies. Since our Blessed and Holy Religion proposes God, as the Judge of Human Actions, and His Glory, as the sole Point, to which they shou'd all be directed, let us raise our thoughts from the Applauses of Mankind to the Approbation of the Almighty, "when Men and Angels shall be witnesses of our Conduct." Morality, it is true, informs us, that Mercy and Compassion are the Peculiar Ornaments of our Nature; But Christianity teaches us, that the Exercise of these Virtues exalts our Human Nature into the nearest Resemblance of the Divine; and that "by putting on Bowels of Mercy and Kindness, by binding up the Broken-Hearted, and by Providing for the Sick and Needy," we resemble, as much as it is possible for us in our Present State, the Son of God, whose peculiar Excellency it was to go "about doing Good, and healing every Sickness, and every Disease among the People." *Mat. ix. 35.* And by Thus treading in the Steps of our Lord and Master, we are abundantly assured, that we are laying up in Store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, and that not only the Blessing of Those, whom we thus Charitably relieve, will come upon us, but the Blessing likewise of the Judge of the Whole World, who has positively declared, that he will Place every Action of this kind to his own Account, and reward it accordingly. „ In as much, says "he, as Ye have done it unto one of the least of these My Bre-

“ thren, ye have done it unto me. Enter ye therefore into Life
 “ Eternal.”

How ought we to Praise the Lord for his Goodness, who by thus Revealing his Divine Will unto us, hath “ poured
 “ into our Hearts That most Excellent Gift of Charity, the
 “ very Bond of Peace, and of all Perfectness, and without
 “ which all our doings are nothing worth?” To what, but a Religious Sense of our Duty to God, manifested in our Love to our Fellow-Creatures, can we possibly impute the amazing Success, with which This Charity has been attended, which was no sooner thought on, than put in Execution; no sooner conceived, than brought to Maturity? Some Peculiar Advantages indeed it had, by taking it's rise at a time, when Divine Providence had placed at the Head of This Diocese a Prelate of most distinguished Virtues, always zealous in the Service of his God, always unwearied in well-doing. But then, how sensibly must the Loss of so valuable a Life have been felt amongst us, had not the same Virtues been most happily united in his Successor, had not the same Disposition to Benefit Mankind been the Amiable Part of his Character? May we not reasonably hope under such a Patronage, and from the noble Contributions, which are annually raised for the Support of This Charity, (and which ought upon this Occasion to be mentioned, as they are, with the warmest Gratitude) that it will be handed down to the latest Posterity, not only with the Present, but even Greater Advantages, and that “ the Poor will here always find a sure
 “ refuge in the needful time of trouble?” With this View,
 may

may God grant, that there may never be wanting a Set of Men, equal in Skill, equal in Humanity, to Those Learned Gentlemen, who have given such abundant proof both of their Ability and Diligence in their constant Attendance on These unhappy Objects of Distress, and whom I will beg leave to address in the Language of the *Roman* Orator upon Another Occasion, tho' equally applicable to this. *Nil est tam Populare, quam Bonitas. Nulla de Virtutibus vestris plurimis, nec gratior, nec admirabilior, quam Misericordia est: Homines enim ad Deos nullâ re propius accedunt, quam Salutem Hominibus dando. Nihil habet nec Fortuna vestra majus, quam ut possitis, nec Natura vestra melius, quam ut velitis, conservare quam Plurimos. Orat. pro Q. Ligario.*

HOWEVER justly the Vices and Immoralities of the Present Age may be censured; Whatever Reason we may have (and some reason we undoubtedly have) to complain of the many Abuses, which ought to be reformed, both in our Civil and Religious Conduct; However deficient we may have been in many Points of Practice, both as Men and Christians, Yet, if we take a View of the several Charities, which are established in This Kingdom, we surely must allow, that some Merit is due to the Virtues of These Times; to Virtues of a most Benevolent Kind, and formed upon the very Plan of That Divine Person, who has declared them to be the Essentials of his Religion.

CHARITY, the Great Duty of the Christian Religion, is then alone Practised in it's Highest Purity and Perfection, when it divides its Streams, like a River, into various Channels, in
order

order that it may more effectually serve the several Purposes of Those, who live within the reach of it's refreshing Current. And if this be the case, what pleasing Reflections must we feel, when we turn our Eyes towards the Great Metropolis of This Nation, no less distinguished for its extensive Charities, than for its extensive Commerce? (And indeed it seldom fails, but when the Latter flourishes most, the Former is carried to the Greatest Height) Here, I say, we see This Fountain of Christian Love pouring forth it's Streams of Health and Happiness to all around it.—Here, That Charity, which Our Blessed Lord both taught and Practised, is most happily displayed in all its Amiable Offices——Here we see Her employed in Recalling the Shattered Remains of Reason, and, after all the various Sports of a Wild and Heated Imagination, endeavouring, by every possible Method, to replace her again in her Original State of Tranquility and Peace. An Office of the most Interesting Nature to Mankind, to restore the use of That Invaluable Blessing, which alone distinguishes them from the Rest of the Creation.

Again. VIEW the Havock, and Desolation, which has been generally made by the Small-Pox in every Populous City, till Divine Providence discovered a Method of lessening the Malignity of a Distemper, so fatal to the Human Species. View it, I say, in all its Malignant and Rapid Progress, when scarce One in Seven escaped it's Destructive Force. View it with all its aggravating Circumstances, when left to range at large without a Proper Restraint, and View it now in its Present State, when the Poyson is so gently conveyed, that the Weakest
Con-

Constitution is not only enabled to Struggle with it, but to Overcome it, and when, according to the lowest computation, not One in Two Hundred dies under the Artificial Method of communicating This Distemper. And This Blessing of such Interesting Consequence to the Human Species, and which for some time was engrossed as the sole Privilege of the Rich, the Poor and the Indigent are now Partakers of, by the Liberal Contributions of Those, who rejoice in every Opportunity of Promoting the Welfare of their Fellow-Creatures. As the Happiness and Prosperity of a Nation absolutely depends upon the Number of it's Inhabitants, I trust in God, that a Method, manifestly tending to answer so desirable an End, will in Process of time become an Universal Practice, and that Hospitals will be erected, in the Neighbourhood of every Populous City, for Inoculating the Children of the Poor. In short, such is the Extensive Benevolence of the Present Age, such it's Compassionate Attention to the Distresses of the Lower Class of Mankind, that there is scarce a Calamity incident to Human Nature, but a Fund is immediately Established for it's Relief. Nay even "out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings are the Praises of
 " This Generation Perfected. Happy therefore are the People,
 " who are in such a case, Yea Blessed are the People, who
 " have the Lord for their God, and who love him with all
 " their Heart, and with all their Soul, and their Neighbour as
 " themselves."

OTHER Countries, it is true, and especially Those, where Popery rides Triumphant, erect, as well as we, Magnificent Structures, most Nobly and Amply endowed, but — for far
 D. differ-

different Ends and Purposes —— Not for the Maintenance and Support of the Poor, and the Miserable, but for the Reception of the Indolent in Affluence and Plenty. —— Not for Restoring Useful Members to Society, but for Excluding Those, who might be so, from having any Share in it. —— Not to Feed the Hungry, Clothe the Naked, Visit and take Care of the Sick, but to spread Hatred, Variance, Confusion, and Strife, by Their Emissaries every where dispersed, to unhinge Other Governments, by Poisoning the Civil and Religious Principles of their People. Where That Charity therefore prevails, which is stiled by the Apostle, “ the Fulfilling of the Law,” I shall leave to your own Determinations, after having closed This Discourse with *St Paul’s* Description of it. “ Charity, says This Apostle, “ worketh no ill to its Neighbour; Charity “ suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity “ vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up, is not easily Provoked, “ Thinketh no Evil, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth “ in the Truth.”

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, Henceforth, and for Evermore. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

E R R A T U M.

In Page 12, Line 7, for when, read *where*.